

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for making a fresh cheese comprising:
pasteurizing and acidifying one or more dairy components to obtain a cheese dairy product;
coagulating the cheese dairy product to form a coagulum comprising curd and whey;
cutting the coagulum and removing the whey thereby leaving the curd;
heating the curd using steam and kneading the curd to produce a fibrous mass;
the coagulating, cutting, heating and kneading steps being performed without intermediate freezing, cold storage or packing;
before or during heating, adding to the curd or to the fibrous mass an extender, the extender comprising at least one source of fat;
processing the fibrous mass to produce a cheese product.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one source of fat is present in the extender in an amount of at least about 0.5 wt.%.
3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one source of fat is present in the extender in an amount ranging from about 0.5 wt.% to about 30 wt.%.
4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one source of fat is selected from the group consisting of butter, plastic cream, plastic fat, anhydrous milk fat, cream, whey cream, vegetable fat, and animal fat.
5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the extender further comprises one or more low cost solids.
6. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein the low cost solids are selected from the group consisting of starch, maltodextrin, and nonfat milk solids.
7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the extender further comprises water.